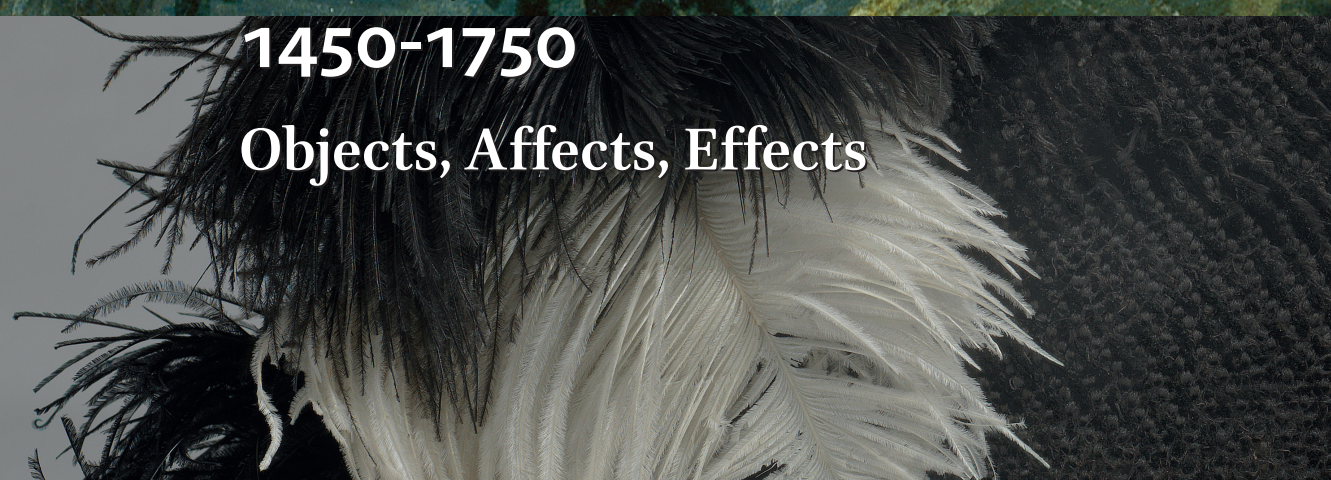
VISUAL AND MATERIAL CULTURE, 1300-1700

Edited by Susanna Burghartz, Lucas Burkart,
Christine Göttler and Ulinka Rublack

Materialized Identities in Early Modern Culture, 1450-1750

Objects, Affects, Effects



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Cover illustration: Details from Karel van Mander, *Before the Flood*, 1600. Oil on copper, 31.1 × 15.6 cm. Frankfurt am Main, Städel Museum, inv. no. 2088. Image © Städel Museum, photo: U. Edelmann / Artothek; High felt hat with silk pile and ostrich feathers, of the kind sourced by Hans Fugger during the second half of the sixteenth century. H: 22.5 cm. Nuremberg, German National Museum. Image © Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg. Photo: M. Runge; Glass bowl, Murano, around 1500. D: 25.50 cm, H: 7.0 cm. London, British Museum, museum number: S.375. Image © The Trustees of the British Museum; Jean Jacques Boissard, *Gentil' donne venetiane/ Quando portano bruno et Vedoé*, costume book [Trachtenbuch] for Johann Jakob Fugger, 1559, fol. 63. Pen and ink drawing. Herzogin Anna Amalia Library, Cod. Oct. 193. Image © Klassik Stiftung Weimar, HAAB, Signatur: Oct 193. OpenAccess: "All rights reserved."

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1. Negotiating the Pleasure of Glass: Production, Consumption, and Affective Regimes in Renaissance Venice

Lucas Burkart

Abstract
Since the Renaissance, glass has been associated with Venice like no other material. It represents a local industry and its international prestige. While research has mostly focused on high-end products, this chapter takes a broader approach. It illuminates the entire spectrum of glass production and its significance for the economy and trade of Renaissance Venice. It investigates how glass as a material affected the society of Renaissance Venice. In general, the low price of glass made it in general affordable to growing social groups and its distinct malleability allowed them to participate in the formal and aesthetic ideals of the Renaissance. Given the industry's economic and trading importance, glass was ubiquitous in Venice; diverse professional and social groups were engaged in it, generated a shared sense for the material and developed a nuanced lexicon that was used in social, cultural, and religious debates. In material, pictorial as well as literary form glass and its material features served to establish affective regimes that served to navigate through an increasing material world and contemporarily shape a community's identity.

Keywords: Venetian glass industry; high and low glass; trading glass; Renaissance taste for glass; sacred matter and erotic material

Between 1450 and 1650, glass objects produced in Venice and on the nearby island of Murano enjoyed the highest reputation in Europe and beyond. Contemporary travellers to the Lagoon witnessed the art when visiting the local glass workshops

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and their accounts spread the fame of Venetian glass. On his return from the Holy Land, the Dominican friar Felix Fabri recorded such a visit in his Evagatorium, "there is no other place on earth you can find such precious glass as is produced there every day." Fabri's admiration arose from the masters' industriousness (*industriosi artifices*), but he was even more excited about the material properties of glass. These masters "out of the fragile material, formed vases so elegant that they almost exceeded those adorned with gold, silver, and precious stones."[1] More than a hundred years later, the English travel writer Thomas Coryat took the same line by highlighting the material characteristics of glass production, "I passed in a Gondola to pleasant Murano, distant about a little mile from the citie, where they make their delicate glasses, so famous over al Christendome for the incomparable finenes thereof, and in one of their working houses I made a glass my selfe."[2] Despite having different reasons for visiting the Lagoon, Fabri and Coryat shared the same view of the Venetian glass industry. Both accounts are typical for the period. Murano was considered the most important production site, while glass was seen as a specifically Venetian material.

In the long historiographical tradition on Venetian glass, these views were more or less conserved and replicated. Most studies, both local and international, directed attention to the unique form and style in the high-end production of Venetian glass, and its artistic ingenuity and development after the invention of *cristallo* around 1450. This focus has been supported by the representation of precious glass objects in paintings by renowned artists of Renaissance Venice such as Bellini, Carpaccio, Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese, and others.

This chapter proposes a shift in perspective, to view Venetian glass as a material in the making and to analyse the impact it had on shaping Venetian social identities and affective regimes. It will thus explore the economic, societal, and cultural framework in which glass developed in Renaissance Venice. This broad focus is in contrast to conventional research that has usually been devoted to the relatively narrow segment of high-end glass production. It has been deliberately chosen because it brings the material as such to the forefront and allows it to appropriately include the ubiquity of glass in the variety of its products in the interpretation of its material properties and impact on Venetian Renaissance society. Focusing on the analysis of the material characteristics of glass also means enriching the

1 "non enim reperiuntur hodie in mundo tam pretiosa vitra, sicut ibi sunt cottidie, […] industriosi artifices, qui ex fragili materia formant vasa tam elegantia, ut paene superent aurea, argentea, pretiosis lapidibus ornata vasa […]." *Fratris Felicis Fabri Evagatorium in Terrae Sanctae, Arabie et Aegyptiae Peregrinationem*, ed. Konrad D. Hassler, vol. 3, Bibliothek des Literarischen Vereins in Stuttgart 18 (Stuttgart: Stuttgardiæ, 1849), 395.

2 Thomas Coryate, *Coryat's crudities: hastily gobled up in five moneths travells in France, Savoy, Italy, Rhetia commonly called the Grisons country, Helvetia alias Switzerland, some parts of high Germany and the Netherlands* (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1905), 387.

investigation with a sensorially oriented idea of social identity. Such an approach seizes upon the visual appeal of crystal glass that scholarship has long stressed. Highly transparent and virtually spotless, *cristallo* became synonymous with Venetian glass, and was known as *vetro alla Vinitiana* or *venedisches glas* and famous for its ingenuity and artistic innovation in general. As *façon de Venise*, a term first documented in 1549, these very ideas were spread in Europe and beyond.[3] Despite the close association with light and, therefore, the symbolic, in both Christianity and Islam, the aesthetic appeal of glass was not only visual but sensual. Material properties of glass, such as its smooth surface, ornamental value, and malleable form, provoked sensual pleasure and added to the affective value of Venetian glass.

Inspired by recent studies on the history of Renaissance material culture, this chapter argues that glass had an agentive and affective impact as both a commodity and as a material. It will, therefore, adopt a material perspective and investigate the effects of glass in Renaissance Venice. An analysis of glass as a material involves an examination of how it was produced, consumed, and utilized. It will be argued that the materiality of glass played a crucial role in Venetian economy, society, and culture.

Such an approach has to contend with a wide range of sources, both textual and visual, along with surviving artefacts. While this body of sources is well known to researchers in the field, they provide new insights when analysed from the perspective of agentive matter. Ubiquitous in the urban space and more closely associated with Venice than any other material, glass enriched the material world of the time, fostered a trade in consumer products and luxury goods, and inspired contemporary imagination. Glass became desirable and in high demand. The appeal of Venetian glass, however, arose not only from its availability as a commodity and the associated consumer demand, but was also due to its unique material features and the knowledge and expertise of Venetian professional glassmakers. As a consequence, the material affected not only producers but wider social strata. The material features of glass were negotiated and exploited beyond furnaces and workshops. In social action and communication, Venetian glass generated a material lexicon that was widely used, secured material value, and shaped social identities.

Yet before turning to the emotive effects and affective impact of glass as a material, this chapter investigates more closely the material relations of glass in Renaissance Venice. What types and forms of glass were crafted in the city? Who was involved

3 For *façon de Venise*, its semantics, and historiographical challenges see Erwin Baumgartner, *Reflets de Venise: Gläser des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts in Schweizer Sammlungen: verres des XVIe et XVIIe siècles de collections suisses*, Publications du Vitrocentre Romont (Bern: Lang, 2015), 13. For its first use as a label-term see Alexandre Pinchart, "Les fabriques de verres de Venise d'Anvers et de Bruxelles au XVIième et au XVIIième siècle," *Bulletin des Commissions Royales d'Art et d'Archéologie* 21 (1882): 343–394, in particular 371f.; Florent Pholien, *La verrerie et ses artistes au pays de Liège* (Liège: Bénard, 1899), 50.

in its production, commerce, and consumption and, finally, what networks enabled both the circulation of glass objects and exchange about its cultural meaning?

Mapping an Industry – Venetian Trading Networks and Glass Product Lines

In the summer of 1590, the vessel *Santa Maria delle Grazie* left the Lagoon, with stopovers in Zakynthos, Kythira, Crete, and Cyprus, before finally reaching its destination in Tripoli, where some of the freight was carried on land to Aleppo in Syria (Fig. 1.1). In a document, probably drawn up by the owner Stefano Patti, the entire cargo of the vessel was registered.[4] More than 190 affiliates contributed to the shipment with loads of different sizes (Fig. 1.2). Every entry is identified in the margin with the owner's trademark, marking where the respective goods needed to be unloaded and delivered. Additionally, the source records the type of commodity and its packaging, its destination, the recipient, and finally the corresponding tax

Figure 1.1: Trading route through Eastern Mediterranean Sea taken by *Santa Maria delle Grazie* in 1590. Image © Nicolai Kölmel.

4 ASVe, Miscellanea Gregolin, b. 14, reg. D.

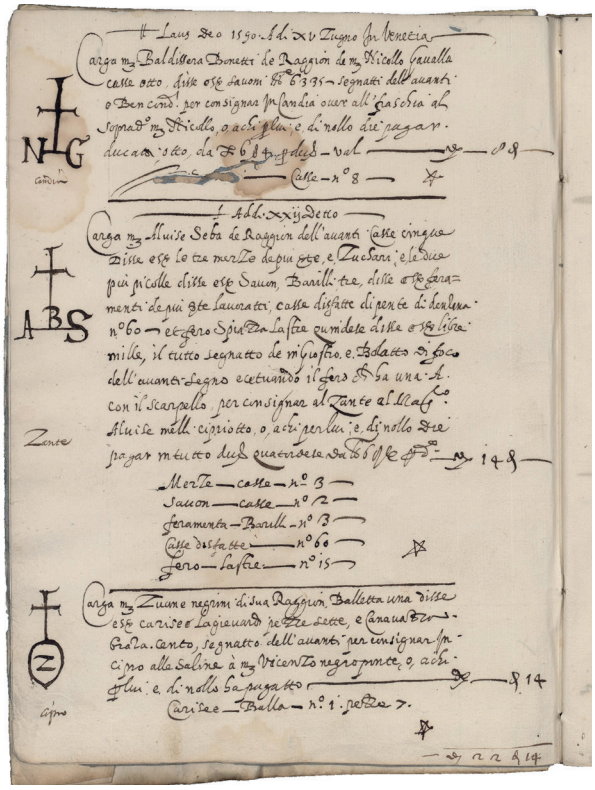

Figure 1.2: Cargo list of *Santa Maria delle Grazie*. Fol. 3v. Venice, Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Miscellanea Gregolin, shelf no. b. 14, reg. D. Image © Archivio di Stato di Venezia.

for transport and insurance. The shipment included all sorts of goods including textiles, money, ironwork, paper, soap, barrels, weapons, braids, ropes, rabbit furs, a horse, and a number of glass objects too, particularly mirrors, beads, and unspecified glass (*vero/i*, *vedro/i*), probably drinking glasses and/or window panes. All the glass was packed in *casse* and *cassette*. While unspecified glass objects were unloaded at all stopovers, the mirrors and beads were all delivered to the final two destinations of Tripoli and Aleppo.

The composition of such cargoes can be deduced from the study of late sixteenth-century Venetian maritime insurance policies conducted by Alberto Tenenti.[5] As far as the written evidence specifies, most exported glass was mass-produced, namely beads, jewellery made of glass (*conterie*), mirrors, window panes, and beakers. Although the documents here do indicate exact quantities, the measuring unit of *casse* or *cassetoni* occasionally amounted to the impressive number of more than 1,700 pieces, containing beakers (*gotti*), bottles (*ingistere*), bells (*chanpanele*), and reeds (*pivette*)

5 Alberto Tenenti, *Naufrages, corsaires et assurances maritimes à Venise: 1592–1609* (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1959).

Figure 1.3: Bunch of red enamelled seed beads, around 1800. D: 0.5 mm, Venice or Murano, Private Collection. Image © Julia Burkart.

to make pearls (*margarite*).[6] The quantity of exported glass beads can be ascertained more precisely. They were measured in quantities of *miera* or *migliara*, literally meaning 1,000 pieces. Beads, however, were not counted but weighed. Onboard the *Sant'Andrea*, which left Venice in September 1601 for Cadìz, there was a cargo of 3,646 *migliara* glass beads, approximately 3,646,000 pieces. Another shipment on the same vessel contained 2,646 *migliara* of *aggierini* and *latimi*, approximately 2,646,000 beads of blue and milk white. Yet another shipment comprised 361 *mazzi* of *smaltiti assortiti*, bunches of enamelled seed beads of different colours destined for further processing (Fig. 1.3). Finally, glass jewellery worth 2,400 ducats was also on board.

The sheer quantity of objects aboard Venetian vessels is stunning and their economic value considerable. These insurance papers, however, normally only register the cargoes of vessels that were shipwrecked or looted by corsairs and pirates. It is thus impossible to extrapolate from these sources any total number of beads exported from Venice. Nevertheless, it is appreciable that despite the low value of both glass sheets and objects, the amount of exported glass must have

6 See Luigi Zecchin, "Il quaderno dei Bortolussi," in *Vetro e vetrai di Murano*, ed. Luigi Zecchin, vol. 2 (Venice: Arsenale Editrice, 1989), 186–189.

Figure 1.4: Map of the Dalmatian Coast with locations of Gnalič and Koločep shipwrecks. Image © Nicolai Kölmel.

comprised a substantial economic and trading share. Although hardly ever studied systematically, it seems obvious that mass production was the economic backbone of the Venetian glass industry.

These observations are confirmed by archaeological finds. In the Adriatic Sea, off the Croatian coast, two shipwrecks from around 1600 have been found and partially recovered. One of these, the Gnalič wreck identified as the *Gagiana* or *Gagliana*, sailed from Venice probably to Constantinople and was shipwrecked at the beginning of 1583 off the coast of Biograd na Moru.[7] Corroborating the evidence in surviving textual sources, archaeological evidence indicates that most of the cargo on board the Gnalič wreck consisted of glass artefacts of two different categories: flat glass, namely mirrors and window panes (25%), and tableware and vessels (75%). More than 700 window panes were recovered (Fig. 1.5). Most of them were

7 Astone Gasparetto, "The Gnalić Wreck: Identification of the Ship," *Journal of Glass Studies* 15 (1973): 79–84; Mitja Guštin, Sauro Gelichi, and Konrad Spindler, eds., *The Heritage of the Serenissima: The Presentation of the Architectural and Archaeological Remains of the Venetian Republic* (Koper: Založba Annales, 2006), 99–104; Irena Lazar, "I vetri del relitto di Gnalić," in *L'avventura del vetro dal Rinascimento al Novecento tra Venezia e mondi lontani*, ed. Aldo Bova (Milan: Skira, 2010), 103–109.

Figure 1.5: Window panes from the Gnalič shipwreck with straw, which served as protection against breaking during transport, end of the sixteenth century. Murano, D: 21 cm. Biograd na Moru, Zavičajni Muzej Biograd na Moru, inv. no. G42. Image © Ivana Asić.

made through standard production methods, intended to meet the demands of a general market.[8] Glass beads were found in the wreck as well. Despite the large quantities of exported glass beads recorded in written sources, the Gnalič shipwreck presents only a small number of beads totalling around 2.5 kilograms (Fig. 1.6).[9]

The ship's original departure from Venice is confirmed, yet the study of the cargo challenges the idea of Venice as an unrivalled site of glass production. About 250 pairs of spectacles, probably from Germany, were not produced in but only shipped from Venice. Stylistic analysis of other artefacts reinforces this hypothesis. Around sixty-five objects found in the wreck were discernibly of Islamic origin. Spots of coloured glass were applied to the surfaces of glass bodies in a way not practised in European workshops. A type of flask found at the site with a narrow neck and a pronounced rim cannot be attested to Western production manuals

8 The finds of the Koločep wreck confirm this. Here the rectangular window panes have been detected still in their wooden boxes lined up one next to the other with a layer of straw or seaweed in between to avoid breaking during transportation. Irena Radić Rossi, "Il relitto di Koločep, Croazia," in Bova, *L'avventura del vetro*, 111–115, in particular figs. 3–5.

9 Irena Lazar and Hugh Willmott, "The Late 16th Century Glass from the Gnalić Wreck: An Overview of Forms," in Guštin et al., *Heritage of the Serenissima*, 99–104. Lazar, "I vetri," 108.

Figure 1.6: Glass beads from the Gnalič shipwreck, end of the sixteenth century. Murano, L: 0.4–0.9 cm. Biograd na Moru, Zavičajni Muzej Biograd na Moru, inv. no. G250. Image © Ivana Asić.

either.[10] The glass carried in the *Gagliana*'s hold came from varying places of origin and, therefore, emphasizes Venice's role as a major hub for glass trade in the Mediterranean.

Mass-produced items made from glass, however, were not only essential to Venetian trade but cultivated a significant presence in the city's private households as well as in urban craft industries. Despite moving furnaces from Venice to Murano in 1291, due to the risk of fire, glass production never entirely disappeared from the city. Various guilds continued to craft glass, specializing in processing either semi-finished glass or manufactured glass objects. Whereas the glass industry in Murano was organized in the dominating *arte dei verieri*, the city of Venice was home to at least six guilds that processed glass in one way or another: the *arti dei*

10 Lazar and Willmott, "Glass from the Gnalić Wreck," 103.

perleri, *margariteri*, *cristaleri e paternostreri*, *specchieri*, *finestrieri*, and *gioiellieri* manufactured glass while the *arti dei venditori di vetro*, *dei marzeri*, *dei muschieri*, and the *arte dei strazaroli* regularly sold glass on a retail scale and complemented the considerable number of people dealing and handling the material. Recent scholarship has convincingly argued that material mattered considerably more in the pre-industrial world than in modern times.[11] The pre-modern material world was characterized by a close engagement between individual actors and materials, which produced embodied knowledge. Moreover, this engagement spawned a highly developed sensitivity for processed materials and their agentive power.

Post-mortem inventories of artisans and shopkeepers document the impressive degree to which glass was present in people's lives. Domenego Bortolussi, the head of the shop *la nave* in Murano, kept accounts of his trade with Milan in the years 1540 and 1541. He recorded more than 10,000 blown glass objects that were packed and shipped from his shop to the Lombardic capital.[12] Master Jacob, the owner of a shop (*marzer*) in the parish of San Zulian, collected not only glass lamps, but traded beads, rosaries, and pearls of different size, shape, and colour in remarkable quantities. He also kept 1,420 pairs of glasses.[13] Master Jacob's holdings seem modest if compared to Francesco's shop "the Angel" where among many other kinds of glass artefacts, almost 700 mirrors were stored.[14]

Evelyn Welch has argued that visual and tactile knowledge were important acquired skills for any profitable market behaviour in the Renaissance.[15] It was essential that both buyers and sellers could distinguish high- and low-quality materials and artisanal production. Venetian shopkeepers clearly needed this knowledge to establish prices. Although it is not known how prices were set, the sources offer some illustrative evidence.[16] In the case of mirrors, size, lucidity, and the reflexivity of the glass were significant factors, as was the material and artistic execution of the frame. In the inventory of the *bottega dell'Angelo*, six mirrors with ebony frames made by a certain master Zuan Maria Marangon were listed.[17] Material qualities were decisive

11 Ulinka Rublack, "Matter in the Material Renaissance," *Past & Present* 219, no. 1 (2013): 41–85.

12 See Zecchin, "Il quaderno," 186–189. For the Bortolussi, see Rachele Scuro's chapter in this volume.

13 ASVe, CI, Misc., b. 35, fasc. 23 (18 September 1531).

14 ASVe, CI, Misc., b. 38, fasc. 29 (2 April 1547).

15 Evelyn Welch, "The Senses in the Marketplace: Sensory Knowledge in a Material World," in *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Renaissance*, ed. Herman Roodenburg (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 61–86. This perspective was introduced by Michael Baxandall and has been widely adopted from both his *Painting and Experience* (1972) and *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany* (1980).

16 The inventory of Jacob of Milan, who owned the shop "the lily," is one of the rare cases where most of the entries include prices. ASVe, CI, Misc., b. 40, fasc. 70 (15 May 1564). For the question of pricing see Evelyn Welch, "Making Money: Pricing and Payments in Renaissance Italy," in *The Material Renaissance*, ed. Michelle O'Malley and Evelyn Welch (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 71–84.

17 ASVe, CI, Misc., b. 38, fasc. 29 (2 April 1547), fol. 15v.

not only for mirrors but for virtually all glass artefacts, for which contemporaries possessed a distinct sense. The colours of beads for rosaries, for instance, are described in the inventories as: *de calcedonia*, *bianchi*, *negri*, *mori*, *zali*, *limonzini*; false pearls were described as *negre*, *dorade*, *inarzentade*, or *de garavana*, probably meaning from the caravans, i.e. coming from the East or with "orientalizing" patterns.

Welch's argument is confirmed by the Venetian evidence. Moreover, this material sensitivity applies not only to the prestigious high-end production of glass art but in similar ways to mass-produced items.[18] Finally, the inventories show that a refined vocabulary was not only required from the retailers but from consumers too. Inventories, usually put together by notaries, describe the material world surrounding them in rich detail. This material lexicon served the purpose of identifying the described object's value in socio-economic and legal processes such as inheritance, marriage, sales, and pawnbroking. Used for these crucial social actions, this rich material vocabulary confirms that a sense for the material was equally shared among producers, wholesalers, retailers, and clients.

In Murano and Venice, mass-produced items made from glass were fabricated, manufactured, exported, locally retailed, and consumed. Material culture, therefore, involved wide social strata, reached deep into the urban crafts and the body politic, and affected everyone engaging with it. Thanks to its low material value, glass was ubiquitous in Renaissance Venice and, at the same time, flourished in a richness of styles, shapes, colours, and qualities that not only exist in surviving artefacts but also in textual sources from the time. Finally, these sources show that the variety of production and material quality that existed required a corresponding vocabulary that disseminated a sense for glass's material features across a wide social spectrum in Renaissance Venice and beyond.

The Power of Simulation and Adaption – Consuming Glass in the Renaissance

The physical and terminological ubiquity of glass in the Lagoon made Venice not only the first marketplace for glass commodities but a centre of especial sensitivity

18 Luca Molà has argued that matter and identity are not only linked through the consumption of commodities, thus visible for historical research into consumer habits. His analysis of diplomatic relations between Venice and the Ottoman Empire, which includes a systematic review of Venetian glassware ordered by the Senate as gifts to Members of the High Porte (pp. 67–68), suggests convincingly that producers were well aware of both the political implications of these artefacts and the social prestige of producing them. Luca Molà, "Material Diplomacy: Venetian Gifts for the Ottoman Empire in the Late Renaissance," in *Global Gifts: The Material Culture of Diplomacy in Early Modern Eurasia*, ed. Zoltán Biedermann, Giorgio Riello, and Anne Gerritsen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 56–87.

for the material itself. Yet, according to Welch, in the Renaissance this sensitivity was neither restricted nor exclusively nourished by producers. It was shared by consumers and their cultural expectations. For glass, this shared sensitivity is particularly convincing because the most important material feature of glass, its vast capacity to simulate, gets to the core of a more general discussion about Renaissance art and culture. Simulation was key to the very idea of the Renaissance. Renaissance art and material culture strongly aimed to imitate and improve upon specific historical and aesthetic models. In scholarship focused mostly on form and style, the case of glass indicates the importance of materiality in such debates. Glass could not only assume virtually any form but could additionally simulate precious materials such as gemstones. Whereas gemstones were still appreciated as *mirabilia*, glass objects became increasingly *artificia*, man-made elements that emulated and improved upon nature itself.

When Isabella d'Este, one of the finest collectors in Renaissance Italy, corresponded with her agent in Venice, Lorenzo da Pavia, her expectations as a consumer clearly emerged. In letters between the two, both the colour and form of glass objects were negotiated at length. In 1503, Lorenzo was instructed to purchase two drinking vases in Murano that Isabella wanted to be of fanciful and beautiful form (*de qualche foza fantasticha e bela*). In order to satisfy her demand, Lorenzo asked her for a draft version of the commissioned objects.[19] Four years later, Lorenzo sent two green enamelled cups and one of *cristallo* to Mantua, with a note that the cups were not currently available in other colours because the required pigments were not available in the workshops.[20] The request for a physical model of the cups, however, was not only expressed by Lorenzo in order to please the marchioness. Isabelle d'Este herself drew from existing artefacts in her collection to aid in her purchasing. In 1507, she wrote to Venice, "I'm sending a silver plate to give an example of how in Murano five similar ones made from enamelled glass of different colours shall be manufactured; I expect those promptly together with the silver template."[21] In 1512, Isabella reacted to the delivery of several glass beakers she did not like with a sketch that should be followed to produce a new set of at least a dozen beakers with lids.[22]

19 ASMn, AG, b. 1440, Carteggio di Inviati e Diversi, c. 296, cart. 1f. (28 September 1503).

20 ASMn, AG, b. 1891, Corrispondenza con Isabella d'Este, provenienze diverse, c. 359, cart., 1f. (13 April 1507).

21 ASMn, AG, b. 2994, Copialettere particolari d'Isabella d'Este, lib. 20, cc. 29v–30r (9 April 1507). "Mandiamovi etiam una piadenetta de argento per monstra acioché a Murano ne facciati fare cinque simile de vetro de smalto de diversi colori et mandarneli subito, insieme cum quella de argento […]."

22 ASMn, AG, b. 2996, Copialettere particolari d'Isabella d'Este, lib. 30, c. 3v (29 February 1512). "Diceti vero che li bichieri che ne haveti mandati non sono belli. Ve mandiamo un dessigno: faretine far al meglior m.ro che sij a Murano una donzena a quella foggia col suo coperto […]."

Isabella d'Este's status as a renowned collector is exceptional; her approach towards Venetian glass, however, was not. By the end of the sixteenth century, Isabella's grandson, Guglielmo Gonzaga, had developed a similar relationship with agents based in Venice. The duke sent detailed instructions to his agents to negotiate with master craftsmen in Murano. In January 1572, for instance, the duke's agent, Bartolomeo del Calice, promised to send someone to Murano with a beaker brought from Mantua. The agent was to ask the Muranese masters to reproduce it, but to apply a smaller pattern of decorative forms (*lacrime*), and to use thinner and more beautiful *cristallo*. He then promised to keep the wooden model of the beaker in order to create a sample set of six beakers with other, probably more qualified, masters.[23]

Customers of the stature of Isabella d'Este and Guglielmo Gonzaga did not leave the production of glass artefacts to the ingenuity of workshops alone. The correspondence rather highlights the decisive role commissioners and agents played in the production process. All parties involved shared a sense for the processed material and contributed to define the style, shape, and colour of the objects produced. The sense for a material such as glass, its specific qualities, and its production was negotiated and shared proportionally by producers, retailers, and consumers in the material world of the Renaissance.[24] In the view of Lorenzo da Pavia, this was absolutely necessary; he harshly reprimanded local glassmasters, calling them *mastri poveri de invencione*.[25]

The importance of mutual interaction between producers, intermediaries such as agents or dealers, and consumers is also confirmed by recent scholarship on branding strategies. The way specific goods could be distinguished from other rival products must take into consideration that early modern commodity markets were less transparent than today.[26] The branding of Venetian glass production follows

23 ASMn, AG, b. 1505, Carteggio di Inviati e Diversi, f. III, cc. 564–565 (31 January 1572). "[…] che subito si mandò a Murano con la mostra del gotto che mi ha mandato vostra signoria illustrissima per vedere se 'l maestro che fece li altro potteva farli con le lachrime più menude et de cristallo più sottile et più bello […] Nondimeno ho tenuto la forma di legno appresso di me per pottere provare qualche altro maestro et cusì ne faro fare ancora meza dozena et li manderò."

24 This is, for instance, confirmed by the commissions of Sokollu Mehmet Pasha, grand vizier of Murad III, who in 1578 ordered 2,000 round window panes (*rui*) from Venice. The glass, however, was only one "currency of artefacts" the vizier requested; moreover, he expressed very clearly his views on these artefacts' material quality, artistry, and value. In the correspondence of the Venetian *bailo*, who acted as an intermediary, these artefacts figured as gifts but were in fact tribute payments to secure good relations with the High Porte, critical for Venetian trade to the Levant. See Julian Raby, "The Serenissima and the Sublime Porte: Art in the Art of Diplomacy, 1453–1600," in *Venice and the Islamic World, 828–1797*, ed. Stefano Carboni (New Haven, CT and London: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2007), 90–119, here 97.

25 ASMn, AG, b. 1440, Carteggio di Inviati e Diversi, c. 296, cart. 1f. (28 September 1503).

26 Richardson, Gary, "Brand Names before the Industrial Revolution," in *NBER Working Papers* No. 13930 (April 2008): 1–55.

slightly different patterns than other goods do. If branding can be considered as an attempt to guarantee the quality of a product and its raw materials and to tie them closely to an origin, then glass *à la façon de Venise* is actually more likely to skim the added value of this quality assurance. By connecting Venice inseparably with the highest standards of formal innovation, artistic ingenuity, and material perfection – namely complete transparency – the brand automatically measures all glass production against it and at the same time declares it an imitation. The material properties of glass itself thus formed the ground on which the branding for Venetian glass production was based, while for other goods markings, declarations, and stamps were common on either the products themselves or their packaging.[27] A prerequisite for this was in any case a sensitivity for these very material characteristics, which was jointly developed and shared by producers, traders, and consumers.

The approach taken in this paper was inspired by the work of Michael Baxandall, who argued that Renaissance art was created, consumed, and understood under specific cultural conditions. Individual and collective experiences contributed to a "visual culture" that shaped Renaissance art. Moreover, around 1500, he observed a shift from the estimation of the cost of raw materials and ingredients of painting, towards the artist's craftsmanship.[28] For the context studied here, one could expand Baxandall's "period eye" to "period senses." Such an approach not only insists on the importance of material sensitivity, craftmanship, and the organization of production processes but defines material conditions, artistic creation, and cultural consumption as mutually intertwined. The correspondence between patron and agent shows how active consumers shaped the glass artefacts they purchased. Moreover, it is obvious from these letters that the specific material qualities of glass were particularly suited for such a cultural negotiation process.

In this light, it is worthwhile to turn our attention to Venetian glass production and its transformation between 1450 and 1550. In contrast to traditional historiography that attached much weight to the Venetian legislation that supposedly fostered the industry's heyday, it will be argued that the rise and reputation of Venetian glass started from the specific material features of glass that perfectly met the consumerist desires of Renaissance societies.

27 Ilja Van Damme, "From a 'Knowledgable' Salesman towards a 'Recognizable' Product? Questioning Branding Strategies before Industrialization (Antwerp, Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries)," in *Concepts of Value in European Material Culture, 1500–1900*, ed. Bert De Munck and Lyna Dries, 75–101 (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2015).

28 Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972). Michael Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany*, rev. ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982). For a discussion of this approach see: Adrian Rifkin, *About Michael Baxandall* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999).

In her chapter, Rachele Scuro demonstrates that the glass industry was not only characterized by high social mobility, but also that this social structure promoted an atmosphere in which innovation and experimentation with the material flourished. Additionally, recent scholarship has abandoned the idea that guild regulations were essentially hostile to innovation and modernization in general and rather emphasize their essential role to this end.[29] In fact, a sixteenth-century manuscript assembling different regulations from the *arte dei verieri di Murano* confirms this observation. The introductory formula of the document (*arenga*) reads as follows: "Et chel mestier nostro di verieri da Murano fano ogni zorno cose nuove per inzegno et subtilita di maistri per le experientie che se vedano per zornata et azo che si nobil mestier remagni qui in Muran a laude et gloria de la Serenissima Sig.a nostra et del mestier nostro di verieri di Murano […]."[30] In short, everyday innovation was claimed to be resident with the masters, central to the guild's self-image, and, finally, something that contributed to the praise and glory of the Republic. The idea of the inherent innovation of the art of glass making is telling and refers to an industry ready to push artisanal boundaries and to experiment with a material's features.

According to a well-established but yet legendary account, the invention of *cristallo* was made by Angelo Barovier in his Murano workshop around 1450. *Cristallo* undeniably raised Venetian glass production to new heights by capturing perfect transparency in a material object. This artificial innovation was enthusiastically received because it combined precious rock crystal with the lightness of blown glass. As a dissimulation, the material utopia *cristallo* presented itself as an *artificium* created from the material components used in the art.

Other innovations in the Venetian glass industry proceeded to imitate existing materials. *Calcedonio*, for instance, resembled a mineral and was achieved by adding to a melting of *cristallo* copper oxyd, minium, and metallic powder, best obtained from blacksmiths, as an early seventeenth-century recipe book reports.[31] The result was marvellous since it materialized a contradiction between the associated and the processed material: visually solid, opaque, and stony, the artefact's lightweight,

29 See Stephen R. Epstein and Maarten Prak, eds., *Guilds, Innovation and the European Economy, 1400–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). For glass see Francesca Trivellato, "Guilds, Technology and Economic Change in Early Modern Venice," in Epstein and Prak, *Guilds, Innovation and the European Economy*, 199–231. Corinne Maite, *Les chemins de verre: les migrations des verriers d'Altare et de Venise, XVIe–XIXe siècles* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2009). Karel Davids and Bert De Munck, eds., *Innovation and Creativity in Late Medieval and Early Modern European Cities* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2014).

30 ASVe, Arti, b. 726, 10, Die XVII februarij MDX.mo (after fol. 91v). For a short overview on the reorganization of guild regulations in the fifteenth century see Attilia Dorigato, *L'arte del vetro a Murano* (Venice: Arsenale, 2002), 34.

31 Luigi Zecchin, *Il ricettario Darduin: un codice vetrario del Seicento trascritto e commentato* (Venice: Arsenale, 1986), 171.

Figure 1.7: Ewer of chalcedony glass, ca. 1500–1525. Blown, with added spout, handle and foot from Murano, 30.5 cm × 19.5 cm max. London, Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. no. 1828-18255. Image © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Figure 1.8: The Rothschild Bowl, 1500–1510. *Lattimo* with colour enamelling. Murano, H: 5.9 cm, Rim D: 14.1 cm, Foot D: 6.3 cm. Corning, NY, The Corning Museum of Glass, inv. no. 76.3.17. Image © The Corning Museum of Glass.

wispy nature would only be discovered when lifted or dropped (Fig. 1.7). Another example further illustrates Venetian glassmakers' finesse for simulating material, form, and colour. Around the middle of the fifteenth century, porcelain from China appeared in Europe and became immediately extremely popular. In spite of the increasing demand for porcelain, Europeans until the eighteenth century were only able to produce a porcelain substitute, often referred to as "soft paste porcelain" or "fritware." Venetian glassmakers, however, promptly responded with the invention of *lattimo*, a milky glass displaying the desired fineness and whitish colour of porcelain, as the Rothschild bowl conserved by the Corning glass museum shows (Fig. 1.8). This dissimulation encompassed the evolvement of artisanal knowledge and techniques as well as the swift orientation towards an increasing trans-local market for luxury goods. No other place was potentially better prepared to respond to these challenges than Venice; here, an advanced glass industry met one of the most important trading hubs for Renaissance commodities and consumer culture.

Recalling Isabella d'Este's expectations for her commission – *vasi de qualche foza fantasticha e bela* – malleability seems to have been another material feature admired in glass. In his treatise *Pirotechnia*, the Art of Fire, Vanuccio Biringuccio stressed malleability as a key feature of glassmaking, "I cannot understand

how the artificer made it so beautifully and marvellously." Biringuccio calls glass manufacture an "almost impossible art" that, recalling the topos, not only simulates nature but surpasses it.[32] For Biringuccio "it seems that all the metals must give way to glass in beauty." In the characteristic style of a *paragone*, he proclaims glass art superior to the other arts and contemporary glass masters more inventive than their antique predecessors. However, this appraisal was explained mostly by the material's features. "It is a material," he continues, "whose body, as we see, is transparent and lustrous, and it is coloured with substances or traces of metal to any kind of desired colour, in such a way that with the beauty of gems it deceives the judgement of the eyes of very experienced men."[33] Moreover, despite the capacity to deceive, Biringuccio assesses glass as ethically above any suspicion since "considering its brief and short life, owing to its brittleness, it cannot and must not be given too much love, and it must be used and kept in mind as an example of the life of man and of the things of this world which, though beautiful, are transitory and frail." According to Biringuccio, glass art was not only the most prized of all arts but ideal in a Christian sense too; "all the effects of glass are marvellous."[34]

Glass, however, was not only appreciated in contemporary art theory and ethics, but also in Renaissance social life. Patrick McCray has pointed out that the relatively sudden expansion of Venetian luxury glass manufacturing in the mid-fifteenth century was initiated from within Italian Renaissance culture, as the aforementioned examples from Mantua confirm.[35] Yet the developing consumer desires of new social classes in the Renaissance world increased the demand for luxury goods. Glass artefacts became extremely popular for their cost-effectiveness, although most consumers would still consider them luxury goods. Biringuccio's preference for glass over gold and silver was, therefore, not only morally motivated but anchored in the social realities of the time. Glass allowed wider social strata to increasingly participate in the cultural life of the Renaissance and to follow, imitate, and possibly surpass idealized moral and aesthetic models both ancient and contemporary. Luxury glass artefacts were the most affordable way to display one's own taste and education rather than sheer wealth.

Still, this new orientation did not develop suddenly. In all crafts, tradition was an important source of innovation. The three trendsetting innovations of *cristallo*, *calcedonio*, and *lattimo* did not at first transform the industry at large, although the importance of *cristallo* was immediately acknowledged. Until around 1500, the

32 *The Pirotechnia of Vannoccio Biringuccio*, ed. and trans. Harvey S. Mudd, Cyril Stanley Smith, and Martha Teach Gnudi (New York: The American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers, 1942), 126–133.

33 Ibid., 127.

34 Ibid., 132.

35 Patrick McCray, *Glassmaking in Renaissance Venice: The Fragile Craft* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 65.

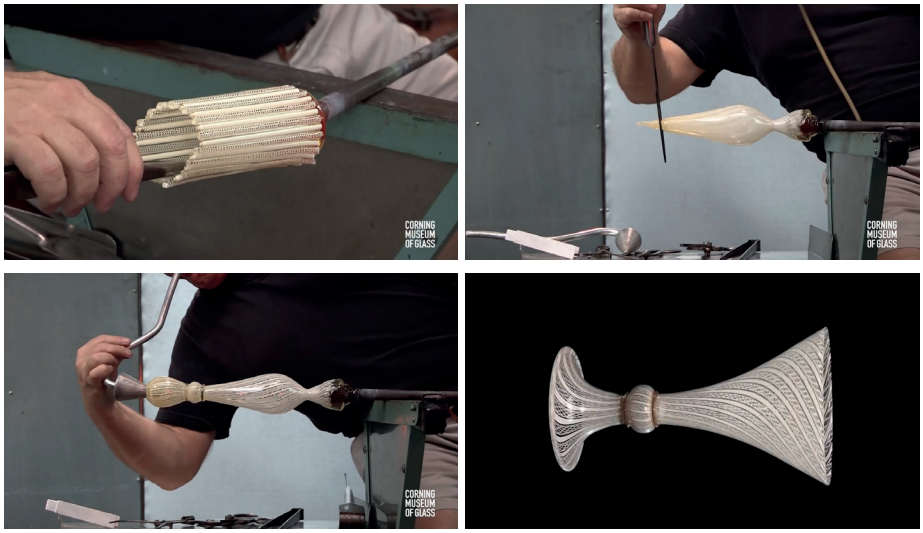

Figure 1.9: Three steps of replicating/blowing a goblet and the corresponding original three-bubble goblet, ca. 1550. Murano, H: 16.6 cm, Rim D: 10.3 cm, Foot D: 8.5 cm. Corning, NY, The Corning Museum of Glass, inv. no. 68.3.64. Images © Courtesy of The Corning Museum of Glass.

art of glass making was quite traditional. In terms of decorative techniques, the influence of high-quality, enamelled glass from Syria or Egypt was still perceptible, if not dominant. Carrying on this technique, Venetian glassmakers continued to decorate transparent and coloured glass with polychrome enamelling, adapting it to more Western tastes and standards. This trend was particularly inspired by Renaissance painting and was increasingly applied to glass art. Style, iconography, and visual repertoires met the tastes of a Christian audience familiar with the revival of antiquity. The Rothschild bowl mentioned above is a fine example of how material innovation and decorative tradition coexisted in one artefact (see Fig. 1.8). The *lattimo* bowl simulates Chinese porcelain but is decorated with the portrait of a long-haired blond youth in Renaissance style.

From the beginning of the sixteenth century, however, the more traditional decoration techniques and patterns began to lose importance. Instead, expertise in handling the material and techniques of making and fabricating glass became central to the art's evolvement. Only at this point in time was glassmaking fully emancipated as an art, emerging comprehensively from within and exploiting the material's qualities to fully promote artistic innovations. The change was paradigmatic and its effects can be observed in the *arenga* from 1510 quoted above, which foregrounds the ingenuity and innovative ability of the guild's members.

Early sixteenth-century innovations confirm this shift. *Filigrana*, *retortoli*, and *reticello* shared a common purpose: to create decorative filigree patterns with simple or twisted *lattimo* strings applied to the *cristallo*. Once attached, the milky

strings fused with the *cristallo* in a second stage of heating. Blowing the molten glass, a pattern of symmetrical strings (simple [*filigrana*] or twisted [*retortoli*, *reticello*]) materialized that perfectly outlined the object's shape. The technique's distinctiveness comes from the contradictory combination of the object's curved body and the regularity of its straight, decorative pattern (Fig. 1.9). Such innovations significantly reduced the importance of painted glass, highlighting the increasing number of ways glassmakers could exploit its malleability instead.

Further innovations confirm glassmaking's increasing inspiration from experimentation with materiality. Although a well-known technique in both antique and medieval glass art, diamond point engraving, resurrected in Venice by the middle of the sixteenth century, was applied equally to transparent and coloured glass and became very popular across Europe. The technique exploits the discrepancy between a glossy surface and a more muted subsurface, exhibiting the fact that the two layers of the material refracted light differently. Another technique exploited the materiality of glass rather differently. *Vetro ghiaccio* converted a physical reaction of the making process into a decorative pattern. The decoration, resembling ice, was translucent but not transparent and was obtained by immersing the half-worked, molten glass in cold water thus creating a fractured ice effect within the material. *Vetro ghiaccio* exemplifies the argument foregrounded here since it underlines how the Venetian glass industry developed by increasingly paying attention to the object's making.

The invention of new types of glass was accompanied by a developing colour palette. Red, green, yellow, purple, and blue glass were commonly produced. The significance of colour is best expressed in the written sources. The recipe book of the Darduin family, dating from the early seventeenth century and containing a collection of recipes spanning three generations of masters, reveals an overwhelmingly variegated colour vocabulary. Blue occurs in at least three tonalities (*acqua marina*, *azuro*, *turchino*), while red, green, and yellow appear in at least four different tones each.[36] Moreover, one colour term could denote many hues. The *ricettario*, for instance, files at least sixteen different recipes for producing roseate glass (*rosechier*); most probably, the various instructions led to different shades of colour. Altogether, the vocabulary of the recipe book shows that early modern craftsmanship had a much more cultivated sense for colour differences than we commonly do in the present day.

The focus on colour in the *ricettario Darduin* is not exceptional. Recipe books for Renaissance glassmaking are almost exclusively concerned with colours; apparently, the chemical composition of the molten glass (*fritta*) was the stage in the production process that could be best transferred in writing and passed from one master to

36 Zecchin, *Il ricettario*, passim.

another. By contrast, the written sources fail to mention handling or blowing glass and do not acknowledge the artful creativity of the *bizzarerie* at all. Either these aspects of artisanal knowledge were hard to record or it was unnecessary to do so.[37] In other words, both the innovative techniques of the Venetian glass industry and new typologies of written sources focused on the material and much less on form and style.

The shift of perspective from form to material offers the opportunity to tell a different story about the development of glass art in Renaissance Venice. It highlights the increasing expertise in handling and making, stresses the participation of wider social groups in the process of shaping the Renaissance material world, and, finally, unveils the existence of a period sense affording a cultural framework for the art's development, the understanding of the material in the making, and its socio-cultural effects.[38]

Transparent or Invisible – "Cristallo" and the Body of Christ

Associations between Venetian glass studies and the masterpieces of Renaissance painting are often made. Traditional historiography mostly exploited this link to confirm the evolution of form and style in artistic glassmaking. Shifting attention to a material perspective does not contradict this link. Examining glass through a material lens rather offers a new perspective on the social and cultural importance of the visual arts.

In 1562 Paolo Veronese (1528–1588) was commissioned to decorate the refectory of the Dominican island monastery of San Giorgio Maggiore. The monastery had recently undergone a series of renovations mainly executed by Andrea Palladio.[39] The contract gave clear guidance, "[Veronese] is to represent the story of the Supper of the Miracle worked by Christ at Cana in Galilee […] and the said Master Paulo will be obliged to use the highest quality pigments in the work, of the kind that are approved by all experts."[40] The painting depicts the biblical narrative for both an ecclesiastical and lay audience of the monastery and displays the wealth of Renaissance Venice in the vivid setting of a festive banquet (Fig. 1.10). It has been

37 Lambros Malafouris, "At the Potter's Wheel: An Argument for Material Agency," in *Material Agency Towards a Non-Anthropocentric Approach*, ed. Carl Knappet and Lambros Malafouris (New York: Springer, 2008), 19–36.

38 McCray, *Glassmaking*, 68.

39 Tracy E. Cooper, *Palladio's Venice: Architecture and Society in a Renaissance Republic* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005).

40 David Chambers and Brian Pullan, with Jennifer Fletcher, eds., *Venice: A Documentary History, 1450–1630*, repr. (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992), 414.

Figure 1.10: Paolo Veronese, *The Wedding Feast at Cana*, 1563. Oil on canvas, 677 × 994 cm. Image © RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Michel Urtado.

convincingly argued that neither the choice of the subject nor the sumptuous execution by Veronese contravene the site and the function of a Dominican refectory. The study of Italian refectories from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century has shown that their iconographies habitually referred to the Eucharist, often depicting the Last Supper and the Crucifixion. According to Creighton Gilbert, Veronese's *Wedding of Cana* transferred the mystery of transubstantiation from sacramental terms to a more mundane setting.[41] Veronese lavishly painted the biblical narrative in a scene evoking both Renaissance Venice and its pictorial traditions: the architecture, the perspectives, the depicted characters, and the richness of the material world represented the culture of solemn feasting in Renaissance Venice. However, Veronese conserved the holiness of the scene by placing the figures of Christ and the Virgin Mary in the very centre of the painting, distinguishing them from the other characters with haloes and antiquated clothing. Navigating between the sacred and profane, the painting portrays the representation of the miracle first performed by Christ as a typological preannouncement of the Eucharist and locates it in the Venetian Lagoon.

41 Creighton Gilbert, "Last Suppers and Their Refectories," in *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion*, ed. Charles Trinkhaus and Heiko A. Obermann (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 371–402.

Although both aspects have been acknowledged in historiography, the sacred has mostly been considered the core message and the profane merely its exterior setting. Following a study by Kate Hanson, this chapter argues for a more intertwined importance of the "language of the banquet" by which Veronese "constructed a highly artificial scene that conveyed religious meaning through the specific deployment of markers of realism related to banqueting and eating."[42] Following Hanson's argument, particular attention will be paid to the role of glass in Veronese's monumental painting.

The elegantly shaped crystal goblets depicted in the painting correspond to a type produced in local industry (Fig. 1.11). Together with precious plates, bowls, and jugs made from silver and gold, glass tableware used for contemporary banquets formed a primary opportunity to display both political and social power.[43] Veronese follows the biblical narrative closely and depicts the moment when, near the end of the wedding banquet, the wine supply fell short. Numerous courses of fish and meat would already have been served before the diners' last course of fruits and nuts. In the painting, excess is less directed at the food and more to the tableware and precious textiles worn by the guests. To perform social and political power by conspicuous consumption, however, was not only a concern of artistic representation. In fact, the introduction of sumptuary legislation in Venice started with the attempt to regulate private spending, particularly during wedding banquets.[44] Although glass is, except for its widespread use for false pearls, never mentioned in Venetian sumptuary norms, the ubiquity of glass in everyday life as well as in Veronese's painting emphasizes its constituent role in a performative culture of conspicuous consumption and sociability.

42 Kate H. Hanson, "The Language of the Banquet: Reconsidering Paolo Veronese's Wedding at Cana," *Invisible Culture: An Electronic Journal for Visual Culture* 14 (Winter 2010). Accessed on 9 July 2018. http://www.rochester.edu/in_visible_culture/Issue_14/hanson/.

43 Patricia Fortini Brown, "Behind the Walls: The Material Culture of Venetian Elites," in *Venice Reconsidered: The History of Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297–1797*, ed. John Martin and Dennis Romano (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 295–338.

44 For a general overview of Italian sumptuary legislation see Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli, ed., *La legislazione suntuaria, secoli XIII–XVI: Emilia-Romagna*, Pubblicazioni degli Archivi di Stato Fonti (Rome: Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali, 2002). For Venice see Pompeo Molmenti, *La storia di Venezia nella vita privata dalle origini alla caduta della Repubblica*, vol. 6 (Bergamo: Istituto italiano d'arti grafiche, 1922). For a social historical reading see Diane Owen Hughes, "Sumptuary Law and Social Relations in Renaissance Italy," in *Disputes and Settlements: Law and Human Relations in the West*, ed. John Bossy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 69–99. For the fruitless attempts to implement sumptuary legislation see Jane Bridgeman, "Pagare le pompe: Why Quattrocento Sumptuary Laws Did Not Work," in *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society*, ed. Letizia Panizza (Oxford: Legenda, 2000), 209–226. Finally, for the risk that private profusion could pose to the state see Matteo Casini, "Banquets, Food and Dance: Youth Companies at the Table in Renaissance Venice," *Ludica. Annali di storia e civiltà del gioco* 19–20 (2013–2014): 182–192.

Figure 1.11: Venetian crystal goblet, end of sixteenth century. H: 14.6 cm. Murano, Museo del vetro, inv. no. Cl. VI n. 01092. Image © Photo Archive - Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia.

It has been conclusively shown that the source for Veronese's composition was not the text of the Gospel according to John (2: 1–12) but an adaption by Pietro Aretino (1492–1556) that proved extremely popular in the sixteenth century.[45] First published in 1535 by Francesco Marcolini in Venice, the *Humanità di Christo* was reprinted ten times in Italy before Veronese started work in San Giorgio. Aretino adds significant details to the Gospel's narrative. "The most solemn, the most noble and the most comely people of the city gathered" and "the tables were set up and decorated vases of gold and pure silver were placed on them [...] while the bride was resplendent in nuptial ornaments."[46] None of these details are present in the Gospel but arose from Aretino's cultural imagination. His text and Veronese's painting are inspired by a contemporary material world and its social framework, harnessed to convey the mystery of the Christian faith to contemporary readers and spectators. The focus on glass in Veronese's painting draws attention to materiality as an agentic power in the mutual interaction between the material and symbolic worlds. In this sense, setting the biblical narrative against the backdrop of Venetian sumptuous banqueting culture did not secularize the miracle but performed it in a language both familiar and precious to the audience.

45 Philipp P. Fehl, "Veronese's Decorum: Notes on the Marriage at Cana," in *Art, the Ape of Nature: Studies in Honor of H.W. Janson*, ed. Moshe Barash and Lucy Freeman Sandler (New York and Englewood Cliffs, NJ: H.N. Abrams, Prentice Hall, 1981), 341–365.

46 Pietro Aretino, *I tre libri della humanità di Christo* (Venice: Nicolini da Sabio, 1535), libro secondo, no page numbers. For the English translation of the paragraph see Giuseppe Pavanello, "Più vino per la festa," in *The Miracle of Cana: The Originality of the Re-production* (Venice: Cierre Edizioni, 2011), 24.

Accordingly, Aretino and Veronese assigned a prominent role to glass artefacts. "The servants drew the liquid and took it to the master of ceremonies, who, on smelling the wine that had been harvested from celestial vineyards, cheered up, like a man whose senses had come back to him thanks to the power of vinegar with which he had bathed his wrists. And on tasting, he felt its mordent sweetness distil right down to his toes. And filling a crystal cup [*coppa di Christallo*] with it, he would have sworn that the cup was full of distilled rubies."[47] To witness the miracle, three bodily senses were involved in Aretino's account: smell, taste, and sight. Their impact on the observer is described in a vocabulary that evokes on its part the resurrection, the glory of Christ, and eternal life. To smell the wine reawakens all bodily senses, to taste it means to relish in its heavenly sweetness, and to examine it evokes images of precious rubies that were both a symbol of Christ's glory and of the walls of heavenly Jerusalem. In fact, Aretino concludes the paragraph by saying, "since it was the first miracle that Jesus had made in that region to show all his glory, its marvel amazed everyone. Whence the disciples believed in him."[48] To witness the glory of Christianity involved both the body and the senses. A sensory experience strengthened faith in return. Sacred and profane thus met in bodily experiences shaped by the material world.

As part of the contemporary consumerist culture in Venice, precious glass cups form an almost natural element of a banquet's adornment. The poet from Arezzo, however, assigned a crucial role to these artefacts by exploiting the rhetorical device of paronomasia (*Christo* and *Christallo*). The poet thus suggested a direct link between transparency as the distinctive material feature of Venetian glass and the Saviour. In Veronese's painting, this idea is both displayed and expanded upon. In the left foreground, a richly dressed, black African servant offers wine in a crystal goblet to the bridegroom. The presentation of the miraculous wine appears to be overseen by the master of ceremony. Dressed in a dark green outer garment and an "orientalizing" headdress, the master of ceremony explains the miracle to the bridal couple. In the foreground, on the right, another figure attracts the observer with his elegant and dynamic bodily posture (Fig. 1.12). In *contrapposto*, his right arm propped up at his hip, he lifts a crystal cup filled with wine to examine the sacred liquid up close. He stands out due to the brilliance of his lavish white garment and its decorative pattern.

In the painting it is through sight that the miracle is examined and the glory of Christ is witnessed. In fact, Veronese's tableau not only represents the biblical narrative, set within the scenery of a contemporary banquet, but simultaneously engages with the power of visuality. The act of looking is addressed in different ways that evoke various affective regimes. Whereas the gaze of the bearded man sitting to the left of

47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.

Figure 1.12: Paolo Veronese, *The Wedding Feast at Cana*, detail of Fig. 1.10: A young man contemplating the transparency of an elevated crystal goblet filled with water transformed into wine.

the bride is seemingly inappropriately directed to the newlywed hostess's décolleté, two figures sitting at the opposite table look up to the sky. The visual interaction between the profane and sacred, however, centres upon the figure dressed in white.

In accordance with anti-reformationist beliefs, the visual sense epitomizes contemplation and transcendency. In this figure, the hints for such a reading are manifold. First, in lifting the crystal goblet, the young man evokes the imagery of the chalice of the Eucharist. Second, he witnesses Christ's passion in the transformed wine he examines through the crystal goblet. Finally, his contemplation brings him

closer to Christ in a bodily sense too, at least in the eyes of the attentive observer. The desired *imitatio Christi* shows a fold or a slash on the side of the figure's white garment alluding to the wound on Christ's side. Both the position and the form are unequivocal; they cannot be confused with luxuriously slashed precious textiles and other contemporary fashions displayed elsewhere in the painting.

In regard to religious contemplation, the transparency of the crystal goblet proves crucial. In fact, it is the nine goblets depicted in the painting that reveal the presence of the miraculous wine at the banquet. Besides the servant shown in the right foreground, who pours the transfigured wine in a smaller pitcher made from gold, the wine is visible only in the spotless transparency of the crystal goblets.

The figure of the young man becomes the painting's central negotiating site. Witnessing the miracle within the depicted biblical narrative, he gives an example to be followed by the audience of the painting in San Giorgio. Through the gesture of lifting the goblet, he closely relates the Christological mystery to an artefact that evokes both the reputation of the local glass industry and the banqueting culture of Renaissance Venice. Finally, he transmits a comforting message to the audience by resolving the moral contradiction between modesty as a Christian value and the richness of the contemporary material world. The wound on the side of Christ appears with him on the white silk garment, as if the latter were part of his body. The painting thus unites sumptuous banqueting culture and religious contemplation, for which glass contributes substantially to the affective and bodily regimes at stake.

However, the figure essentially in command of determining these regimes is not the young, glorified goblet-holder but the authoritative bearded man next to him. He directs his young companion to another goblet filled with wine and guides him through his contemplative and bodily experience of the material world. Research has recognized this figure to be none other than Pietro Aretino whose famous portrait by his friend Titian supports such an identification (Fig. 1.13).[49]

When Veronese was working for San Giorgio, Aretino had been dead for several years. Nevertheless, to integrate his portrait into a religious painting was clearly a political statement. In 1559, shortly before dying, Pope Paul IV published the first *Index librorum prohibitorum*, which listed Aretino's complete works.[50] Yet Veronese and

49 A tradition going back to the end of the seventeenth century endeavoured to identify various characters in the painting, from the bridal couple to the remarkable musicians and the bearded man. Aretino's identification, however, seems rather convincing since it is not only based on comparative analysis with Titian's portrait but also on the painting's compositional allusions to the narrative of the Wedding at Cana in the *Humanità di Christo*. See Fehl, "Veronese's Decorum," 344. Moreover, this identification alludes to the circle of learned men who had formed around Aretino since Titian executed his portrait for the editor Francesco Marcolini, who published the *Humanità di Christo* in 1535.

50 Veronese was not the only artist who commemorated the poet's notable influence in Venetian art and politics. See Fehl, "Veronese's Decorum," 347.

Figure 1.13: Titian, *Pietro Aretino*, ca. 1537. Oil on canvas, 102.0 × 85.7 cm. New York, Frick Collection, Henry Clay Frick Bequest, inv. no. 1905.1.115. Image © The Frick Collection.

Aretino shared a vision of and a sense for the material world representing religious belief. The material richness in both Veronese's painting and the lives of Venetian elites did not necessarily contradict Christian religion but rather offered a way to combine the sacred and profane. The increasingly material world of Renaissance Venice could inspire contemplative imagination and support spiritual reflection. Transparency as the main material feature of crystal glass was particularly apt for such a purpose.

Aretino's religious beliefs set forth in his *opere sacre* such as the *Humanità di Christo* have long been overshadowed by his frivolous satirical prose. His acquaintance with discussions on Catholic reform have equally been underestimated.[51] In

51 It has been detailed how Aretino was part of these debates in the 1530s, how his notions are taken up in his sacred works, and, finally, how the aggressive wing of the Catholic reform condemned these positions in the 1540s and during the Council of Trent. See Christopher Cairns, *Pietro Aretino and the Republic of Venice: Researches on Aretino and His Circle in Venice, 1527–1556*, Biblioteca dell'"Archivum Romanicum" Serie 1, Storia, letteratura, paleografia (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1985), in particular 69–124. Raymond B. Waddington, "Pietro Aretino, Religious Writer," *Renaissance Studies: Journal of the Society for Renaissance Studies* 20 (2006): 277–292.

Venice he belonged to a circle of intellectuals that discussed the reform of the Church in more liberal terms than the Roman faction.[52] After the Diet of Regensburg in 1541, the Roman views on reform eventually became dominant. The deaths of two leading reformers and supporters of the Venetian party, Gasparo Contarini (1542) and Gian Matteo Giberti (1543), additionally confirmed the shift in power that was clearly felt in Venice. In a letter sent to Paolo Giovio in February 1546, Aretino expressed fears of censorship and even the burning of his own sacred works.[53]

Aretino's interest in the material world of his times in general, and in Venetian glass in particular, was not confined to the representation of religious attitudes or the language of his sacred works. In his correspondence, wine and precious glass adopted a much more profane meaning, indicative of their importance for a performative social culture endorsed through consumption habits and material values. In a letter from 1529, Aretino expressed his thanks for a gift of wine, "And the little tear it brings to the eyes of those who drink it brings tears to mine as I write about it now; so you can imagine its effect upon me when I see it bubble and sparkle in a fine crystal cup. In short, all the other wines you have sent me have in comparison lost all credit when I try to recall them. And I am indeed sorry that Messer Benedetto sent me those two caps of gold and turquoise silk, for I would prefer to have had wine such as this instead."[54] The value of a fine wine surpassed silk as the most important commodity of the Venetian economy. The link between excellent wine and sumptuous clothes, however, made both commodities markers of social status. Moreover, drinking such fine wine brought tears of joy to his eyes, and did so again when remembering it. Wine's emotive effects were experienced when beheld through a crystal cup (*vetro puro*); thus transparency, the celebrated material quality of Venetian glass, is once again evoked when describing feelings. Consuming wine, fine silk, and crystal glass in Renaissance Venice were not only matters of economic wealth and cultural taste; when performed and shared in correspondence, they contributed to the shaping of social and emotional communities.[55] In Aretino's work we find a material lexicon that was widely disseminated among humanists in Venice and beyond. Aretino's published letters, ranging from religious, satiric, and pornographic writings, established a linguistic repertoire for material goods and bodily senses that connected religious

52 Raymond B. Waddington, "Aretino, Titian, and 'La Humanità di Christo'," in *Forms of Faith in Sixteenth Century Italy*, ed. Abigail Brundin and Matthew Treherne (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), 171–198, in particular 194.

53 Cairns, *Pietro Aretino*, in particular 112–116.

54 Pietro Aretino, *Selected Letters*, trans. George Bull (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976), 63–64.

55 Douglas Biow has argued that the individual and his bodily experiences and desires, his affects and emotions formed the linguistic repertoire used by Aretino to articulate social critique and religious reform. Douglas Biow, *In Your Face: Professional Improprieties and the Art of Being Conspicuous in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), esp. 63–91.

beliefs, ideas of reform, artistic production, and social communities. At the same time, the collected letters shaped a prototype of individuality: the humanist that made his "living out of ink" aspired for social ascension.

Material as Reform – Glass and Bodily Regimes in Renaissance Venice

Just one year before Aretino published the *Humanità di Christo* he had another text printed, probably with Francesco Marcolini. In the *Ragionamento della Nanna e della Antonia fatto a Roma sotto una ficaia* (1534), two women discuss the possible life avenues for Nanna's daughter, Pippa.[56] In the course of a conversation, the advantages and drawbacks of becoming a nun, a wife, or a prostitute are debated. A dialogue between courtesans acts as a parody of contemporary treatises of virtue; indeed, Aretino transgresses most of the social and ethical conventions he outlined in his sacred writings.

Douglas Biow has suggested reading the *Raggionamenti* as a draft for Renaissance individualism directed against Castiglione's *Il libro del Cortegiano*. Castiglione positioned professional self-development within the affective and bodily regimes of court culture, for which he invented the term *sprezzatura*. Aretino, in contrast, set the stage for shaping individual identities in a more open framework that included both wider social sites and players. Here, Aretino pursues a discourse of social reform that goes beyond the inversion of courtly behaviour. Conspicuous consumption, in the manifold facets of the term, was not primarily directed at self-control and the taste for objects of distinction, but was represented in the bodily demands for food and sex.[57] As in his sacred works, Aretino exploits the contemporary material world to articulate his ideas of social reform and views about individual self-development.

Describing the most pious condition of womanhood – entering a convent – Nanna reports how her expectations proved wrong. Exuberance, frivolity, and lasciviousness characterized her experience, and excessive feasting instead of pious fasting was common. The richness and variety of food available in the convent seem to infringe on the sumptuary legislation of the Venetian authorities. In other words, Aretino's parody targets not only the inappropriate behaviour of the clergy but employs the vocabulary of Venetian banqueting familiar to his audience from both pictorial and textual sources. As in the *Humanità di Christo*, Aretino exploits the material world of Renaissance Venice to challenge the line between the sacred and profane.

56 Pietro Aretino, *Sei giornate: ragionamento della Nanna e della Antonia (1534)*, ed. Giovanni Aquilecchia (Bari: Laterza, 1969).

57 Biow, *In Your Face*, 69, 82. Biow convincingly shows how Aretino exploited the semantic field of consumption to closely tie food and sex in his linguistic repertoire and how bodily desires and their satisfaction bridged the two.

Both the consumption of materials and commodities as well as their integration in Renaissance imagery led to emotive and bodily regimes. Nanna recounts how gastronomic excess gave way to the pleasures of the flesh in the nunnery. After dinner one night,

> NANNA: […] a fine lad [came in] with a basket in his hand […].
> ANTONIA: What did he do with the basket, and what was in it?
> NANNA: Wait a while. The lad […] said: "Greetings to your ladyships;" and then, he added: "A servant of this fine brigade brings you the fruits of the earthly paradise." And uncovering his gift, he placed it on the table, and at once, there was a clap like thunder, as the whole company burst into laughter […].
> […]
> ANTONIA: What were the fruits, tell me.
> NANNA: They were those glass fruits which are made by Murano of Venice, in the likeness of a K[azzo, i.e. penis], except that they have two little bells which would be an honor to any big cymbal.
> ANTONIA: Ah, ha, now […] I've got you.
> NANNA: And she was not merely fortunate, but blessed, who came by the thickest and broadest one; and none could keep from kissing her own, as she remarked: "These overcome the temptations of the flesh."[58]

In this passage, Murano, the most famous production site of the time, and the glass artefacts produced there, are inextricably linked with sexual desire.[59]

From the meal Nanna proceeded to a richly decorated room. On the first wall, the life of Saint Nafissa, patron of prostitutes and bawds, was depicted. On the second was an image of Masetto, the gardener from Boccaccio's *Decameron* who satisfied nuns' sexual desires. A portrait gallery of nuns with their lovers and offspring was displayed on the next wall, and on the fourth was a representation of *tutti i modi e tutte le vie che si può chiavare e farsi chiavare*.[60]

Although Aretino does not describe this last painting in detail, in the 1530s, Duke Francesco II Gonzaga commissioned Giulio Romano to execute a similar fresco-cycle for the Palazzo del Té in Mantua. The frescoes do not remain, but a partly fragmentary series of copies by Marcantonio Raimondi survived and circulated. These frescoes

58 Aretino, *Ragionamento*, 13.

59 Aretino used various terms to denote glass dildoes, which is an English (not an Italian) term, that only appeared for the first time in 1593; all are associated with glass (*frutti christallini*, *carota di vetro*, *cotale di vetro*) and some with Murano (*pastinaca Muranese*). See Patricia Simons, "The Cultural History of 'Seigneur Dildoe'," in *Sex Acts in Early Modern Italy: Practice, Performance, Perversion, Punishment*, ed. Allison Levy (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 77–91.

60 Aretino, *Ragionamento*, 16.

were identified as *i modi*, corresponding with the term Aretino used to describe the pictorial decoration in his account.[61] As Linda Wolk-Simon has noticed, *i modi* were not merely frivolous representations, but were new pictorial renderings that aimed to show the bodily parts of lovers and to reflect artistic ideals such as foreshortening and liveliness of composition. Thus the two lovers in most cases do "not lie face to face but in a sinuous interlocking position that juxtaposes the man's face and the woman's breasts and buttocks."[62] Interestingly enough, the only sexual position from the entire pictorial cycle that Aretino describes fulfils these exact requirements: giving herself to a desperate man out of piety, Aretino writes, Saint Nafissa turns her back on him. In other words, the account can also be read as an ekphrasis and, therefore, as a humanistic engagement with classical and contemporary sources and models.[63] Nevertheless, to mock the power of painting by depicting an unfettered orgy remained a scandal, regardless of its classical models and humanist foundations. For the Church, a pictorial programme such as *i modi* was a major offence because it swapped vices for virtues and carnal excess for spiritual awareness.[64]

In the further course of the conversation, Nanna reports not only how she used one of these glass fruits on herself but describes the emotive effects it provoked. The combination of pain and sweet delight at the beginning is soon replaced by pure joy and ecstasy. "When completely inserted as described, I thought to be put to death but this death was sweeter than eternal life." Again, Aretino exploits the vocabulary of religious imagination to parodistically stage carnal lust as virtue. He showed in literary form a vision of female sexuality that, once published, was shared by his mostly male readership. Aretino's language is, as always, hallmarked by a great sensitivity for the material features of the world described. While contemplating the glass dildo she selected from the basket, Nanna divulges its secrets.

NANNA: Unfortunately, I had no warm water close at hand as the nun did who taught me the accurate use of crystal fruits; but necessity is the mother of invention: I simply peed into the thing.
ANTONIA: How did you do that?

61 On the complex relationship between Romano's painting and Raimondi's engravings see Bette Talvacchia, *Taking Positions: On the Erotic in Renaissance Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 3–19.

62 Linda Wolk-Simon, "'Rapture to the Greedy Eyes': Profane Love in the Renaissance," in *Art and Love in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Andrea Bayer (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2009), 45–58 and 200–202 (cat. Nr. 99).

63 This engagement took place in a general framework about legitimacy and illegitimacy that applied to all sorts of texts, images, and objects in Italian Renaissance culture. See for instance Talvacchia, *Taking Positions*, 101–124.

64 The gravity of the offence was proven for Marcantonio Raimondi who, in 1524, was briefly incarcerated by Pope Clement VII for his *i modi* engravings.

NANNA: There was a little hole through which warm water could be poured in.[65]

The passage underlines Aretino's firm acquaintance with the objects, the material properties of glass, and its emotive effects, in particular its distinct malleability and high conductivity of temperature that elevated Nanna's bodily pleasure.

Besides the obvious gender issues that deserve a study of their own, Aretino's description does not only stem from male literary imagination, but is itself indicative of a material Renaissance. Indeed, a few examples of glass dildoes have survived in European collections where they are labelled as hoax drinking glasses (Figs. 1.14 and 1.15), an attribution that seems unlikely.[66] In the light of erotic love and sex in Renaissance art and culture, there is no reason to marginalize them. Instead, they must be considered part of a Renaissance culture that drew on classical heritage and documented period senses and artistic taste.[67] An engraving by Marcantonio Raimondi links the material objects not only to Aretino's *Ragionamenti* but also to pictorial representation of erotic culture. The artist shows a classical nymph standing in a generic landscape using a dildo (Fig. 1.16).[68] It seems that both Raimondi and Aretino were artists that adjusted their artistic production based on consumer demand. By printing their works, they were no longer constrained to the desires of the upper ranks of Renaissance society. Their works thus became accessible to an increasing number of consumers who were unrestrained by wealth, humanistic erudition, and classical taste.[69]

65 Aretino, *Ragionamento*, 22.

66 Robert Schmidt, *Das Glas* (Berlin: Vereinigung Wissenschaftlicher Verleger, 1922), 156. Erwin Baumgartner and Ingeborg Krueger, *Phönix aus Sand und Asche: Glas des Mittelalters* (Munich: Klinkhardt und Biermann, 1988), 421–422. A. M. Koldeweij and A. Willemsen, eds., *Heilig en Profaan. Laatmiddeleeuwse insignes in culturhistorisch perspectief* (Amsterdam: Van Soeren, 1995), 18. Sabine Faust, Peter Seewaldt, and Monika Weidner, "Erotische Kunstwerke im Rheinischen Landesmuseum Trier," *Funde und Ausgrabungen im Bezirk Trier* 39 (2007): 39–59, in particular 57. More examples are conserved in Herne (Westfalen) and Rennes. Determining their age is complex. Whereas these studies support origins in the sixteenth century, or even earlier, Wolk-Simon argues for a later dating. See Wolk-Simon, "Profane Love," note 88.

67 The small number of surviving glass dildoes is not surprising. The fragility of the material on the one hand and the taboo of (female) masturbation in Christian societies on the other constituted a poor framework for their conservation over the centuries.

68 David Landau and Peter W. Parshall, *The Renaissance Print: 1470–1550* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 298. It has been suggested that the existence of only one single copy of this engraving is due to effective censorship efforts by the Catholic Church. See Wolk-Simon, "Profane Love," note 88. The engraving has been considered a fragment. See Simons, "Seigneur Dildoe," 80.

69 For the dynamics between the printing market and erotic imagery/literature see Sara F. Matthews-Grieco, "Satyrs and Sausages: Erotic Strategies and the Print Market in Cinquecento Italy," in *Erotic Cultures of Renaissance Italy: Visual Culture in Early Modernity*, ed. Sara F. Matthews-Grieco (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 19–60.

Figure 1.14: Glass dildo found in Trier, first half of the sixteenth century. L: 17.5 cm, Shaft D: ca. 4 cm. Trier, Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier, inv. no. GG 735; 1910,645. Image © GDKE/Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier / Thomas Zühmer.

Figure 1.15: Glass dildo from Flanders or Italy, first half of the seventeenth century. L: 26.5 cm. Paris, Musée de Cluny, Musée national du Moyen Âge, inv. no. NNI619. Image © RMN-Grand Palais (musée de Cluny - musée national du Moyen Âge) / Franck Raux.

Figure 1.16: Marcantonio Raimondi, *Woman with a Dildo*, ca. 1525. Engraving 14.1 × 7.0 cm. Stockholm, Nationalmuseum, inv. no. NMG B 1169/1990. Image © Cecilia Heisser / Nationalmuseum.

Figure 1.17: *Plate with a Woman and a Basket of 'Fruits'*, ca. 1530. Tin-glazed earthenware (maiolica), D: 34.5 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. no. O.A. 1256. Image © RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Stéphane Maréchalle.

The surviving dildoes underline the importance of materiality and material sensitivity in Renaissance culture. They show how craftsmanship engaged with the materiality of objects and how a material sense contributed to develop and establish commodities for Renaissance societies. The link between female masturbation, its affects, and the prominent role of glass and its material qualities are deeply embedded in Renaissance culture and reflected in an increasing world of goods and consumption. As Linda Wolk-Simon has argued, in this world, images, texts, and objects mutually alluded to each other, their meanings transgressing artistic genres. A majolica plate from the early sixteenth century brings these threads together (Fig. 1.17). A seated woman picks up a phallic shaped object from a basket filled with fruits. The inscription reads AI BO[NI] FRUTI DONE (to the good/pleasant fruits, women) and confirms Aretino's use of the term "fruit" in an erotic sense. At the same time, the artistically designed majolica plate attests to the prevalence of erotic culture in the material world of the Renaissance. Marta Aijmar has pointed out that such an object "certainly resonated with a contemporary audience accustomed

to such licentious anecdotes and salacious literature. Visually, however, it seems to speak a language of sexual exuberance and fertility more than obscenity."[70]

The idea of a period sense and the material lexicon of glass offer a framework in which source material that may seem heterogeneous and distinct can be interpreted from a common viewpoint. Such a view not only broadens our understanding of the material world in the Renaissance but analyses the mutual interaction between individuals, artefacts, and texts.

Conclusion

An approach that focuses on glass as a material propels a well-established field of research in various new directions. It moves perspectives of production and consumption closer together. At the same time, it presents the heterogeneity of Venetian glass production and reveals the industry's economic and trading impact on Venice as a major trading hub in the Mediterranean. Furthermore, it shows that a sense for the material was equally shared by producers and consumers and that both contributed to the development of the art and the marvellous world of goods. Yet the intense engagement people had with glass as a material in Venice generated a nuanced lexicon that was used in social, cultural, and religious debates. In the case of Aretino, it even served to promote ideas of religious, ecclesiastic, and social reform, exploiting different literary genres. Aretino established a linguistic repertoire that connected a highly developed sense for the material world of his time, its impact on the individual's body and soul, and, finally, the affective regimes of religious, social, and cultural life in Renaissance Italy. Just as glass offered a scheme to link sacred and profane in Aretino's writings, it could also be visually exploited, as in the paintings of Paolo Veronese. Finally, the interaction between individuals and glass artefacts in Renaissance Venice shaped the material's features. Transparency and translucency marked visual delight. Ideal for religious symbolic interpretation, glass's capacity to simulate precious materials fostered *aemulatio* of models both classical and contemporary. The material characteristics of glass, however, aroused not only visual delight in educated beholders and renowned collectors. The malleability of glass was crucial to both imitating classical and inventing new forms that could provoke sensual and carnal pleasure. In Renaissance Venice, the encounter between glass and pleasure occurred in the realm of conspicuous consumption as well as in the literary imagination of learned humanists. The material world manifested not only wealth but also acted as a tool for their own self-development.

70 See Marta Ajmar-Wollheim, "'The Spirit Is Ready, but the Flesh Is Tired': Erotic Objects and Marriage in Early Modern Italy," in Matthews-Grieco, *Erotic Cultures*, 148.

For both consumption and culture, the material features of glass were crucial, and materiality served as an interface between them.

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